

The impact of health on work productivity

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The impact of poor health on workplace productivity is often only measured in terms of days absent from work or missed training time. Improving health is seen as valuable because good health increases the amount of time a Soldier is able to be on duty. However, this is only one side of the issue. The other point to consider is: how does health impact productivity *while on duty*?

Absenteeism is a well-recognized consequence of less-than-optimal health. However, decreased health also causes ‘presenteeism.’ Presenteeism is being on duty but not performing at full capacity. Presenteeism is of special concern to the military because military missions are dependent upon optimal levels of performance while on duty.

Military duties require Soldiers to operate at peak levels of physical and mental capacity, and without injury. This level of performance must especially be sustained during times of deployment. World events have accelerated the rate of deployments for Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard personnel. While force readiness is always critical, the current high level of military operations makes readiness more important now than perhaps ever before. Optimal force readiness relies upon healthy human resources.

There are many health factors that can influence force readiness. For example: tobacco use, high levels of stress, and work-related injuries reduce the effectiveness of Soldiers while on duty. These risk factors, however, take on additional significance when considered in light of the unique demands of military missions. For example, tobacco use impairs night vision and coordination. The effects of poorly managed stress, such as insomnia, fatigue, and anxiety, have

obvious consequences for safety. Body composition impacts stamina. Ultimately, all these factors affect mission accomplishment.

A new approach to examining the connection between health and on-duty performance is called Health and Productivity Management (HPM). HPM integrates wellness and prevention; chronic disease management; occupational health and safety; disability management; and organizational health. This integrative approach addresses presenteeism by considering healthy Soldiers as a force asset.

The goal of HPM is to reduce the impact of decreased performance while on duty due to health concerns, to decrease unnecessary time away from duty overall, and minimize total health-related costs, including medical expenses. HPM can be used to identify and deliver services that enhance the performance of our Soldiers. Health is a primary factor in efficient and effective performance. A healthy force is a ready force.

In order for the U.S. military to maintain force readiness, healthy Service members and civilians must continue to be considered a force asset for the 21st century. HPM can be adapted for use in a military environment in order to maximize force readiness and on-duty productivity. HPM is a valuable link between force readiness, force health, and mission accomplishment.

For more information on Health and Productivity Management, go to <http://www.ihpm.org>.